

Senator Lisa Brown

2005 Legislative Update



I want to hear from you!

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Dear Neighbors,

We had numerous successes this year, my first as Senate Majority Leader. This newsletter provides you with the highlights.

Faced with a \$1.7 billion shortfall, we were able to pass a budget focused on children – their education, health and safety – plus key economic strategies. We approved a transportation budget that invests in critical safety projects throughout the state. These budgets, as well as the capital budget, will create jobs in communities all over the state.

We passed landmark legislation in the areas of mental health and the environment, fully funded initiatives that will give teachers cost-of-living increases and keep our kids' classrooms small, and increased enrollments at our higher education institutions – all of which you can read more about inside.

As I began to put together this summary of the session, our community was rocked by the events involving Joseph Edward Duncan and the crimes he is alleged to have committed in Idaho. You'll find more information inside about how our state has been a national leader in enacting legislation that offers the best containment and management of sex offenders.

I've heard from many of you asking about what you can do to help aid victims of Hurricane Katrina. In the coming weeks, there will be much more information available about how you can help the 500 victims who will be relocated to our state. Stay tuned.

Thanks to all of you who wrote, phoned, e-mailed and visited me in Olympia this session. Now that I'm home, please feel free to contact me at my district office with any questions or concerns.

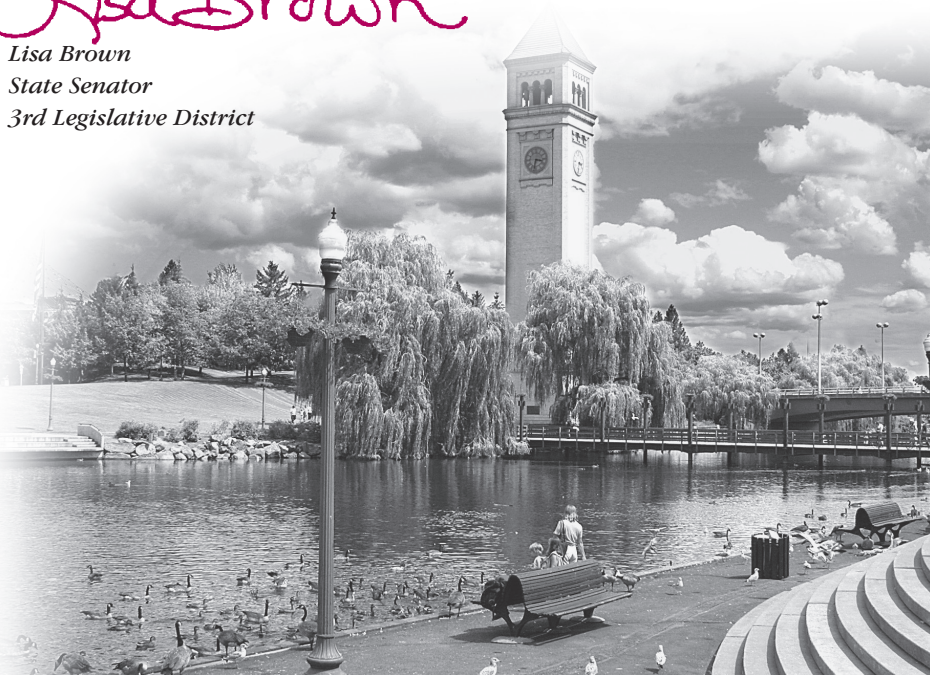
Sincerely,

A stylized, handwritten signature of Lisa Brown in red ink.

Lisa Brown

State Senator

3rd Legislative District



Children and Families

Investing in our future, treating people equally

Good News

Health care for kids. Reversing steps taken in previous sessions that resulted in the loss of medical assistance for thousands of children, the Legislature this year approved funding and policy changes that are expected to increase the number of children covered through the Medicaid program by 38,000. Among these 38,000 children are 8,750 immigrant children whose eligibility for Medicaid-like coverage through a state-only program was recently terminated. This session's actions will help ensure that we are working toward our goal of health care coverage for all Washington children by 2010.



Disappointment

Protecting human rights. We were not able to pass legislation that would have prohibited discrimination based on sexual orientation. Though it came to a full vote of the Senate for the first time since it was introduced 30 years ago, we could not quite muster up enough votes to make it law. Rest assured, I have not begun to give up the fight to push this bill through the full Legislature.

Spokane Scoop

Child care providers. Access to quality child care is something every parent deserves. Child care and early education are critical for two reasons: They help ensure that every child enters school prepared to learn and they allow families to work. This year, I secured \$15 million in the budget for family child care homes and child care centers for rate increases to subsidies paid by the state for low-income and at-risk families. A portion of this funding is reserved for providers in our area of the state.

Health Care

A healthy Washington is a productive Washington

Good News

Mental health treatment and parity. This session we passed a groundbreaking mental health omnibus bill that will improve the quality of treatment available for people grappling to overcome mental illnesses and substance abuse problems. We also backfilled close to \$80 million in lost federal funding for mental health.

One of my proudest moments ever as a legislator came this session when we finally approved a bill that requires that diseases of the mind receive the same level of treatment as diseases of the body.

Life Sciences Discovery Fund. I prime-sponsored a bill we passed that not only has the potential to create 20,000 family-wage jobs, it also will save lives. The bill allows competitive research grants to be awarded to non-profit research centers not just in Seattle, but in Pullman, Richland and Spokane as well. It will also finance research into new understanding of genes and cells.

Disappointment

Regional Support Network. Though we were successful in allocating lost federal funds for mental health treatment, we are losing ground at our Spokane County Regional Support Network (RSN). I am currently working with the Department of Social & Health Services, the Governor's Office, and county and RSN officials to understand how the budget deficit arose in the RSN and propose solutions to avoid the loss of critical mental health services in our community.

Spokane Scoop

Prescription drug foundation. To help people who might otherwise fall through the cracks, I prime-sponsored a bill that establishes a nonprofit foundation to assist uninsured people with incomes below 300 percent of federal poverty level obtain free or low-cost prescription drugs. In Spokane County alone, more than 37,000 individuals lack health insurance. In Kentucky, a similar program helped 44,000 uninsured people and brought in more than \$8 million in free prescription drugs.

Environment

Landmark bills will help keep Evergreen State green

Good News

Clean cars. Faced with a convergence of escalating gas prices and increasing public health risks from polluted air, the Legislature approved sweeping legislation to adopt stricter auto emissions standards in Washington. These so-called California standards will apply to new cars sold or brought into Washington starting in 2009.

“Green buildings.” Green buildings utilize environmentally responsible building products and techniques, provide a healthier environment for students and workers, and ultimately more than pay for their slightly higher construction costs through lower energy bills. This session, Washington became the first state in the nation to adopt these building standards, which will apply to state building projects.

Disappointment

Mercury. Mercury-added components in cars pose a health risk to recycling personnel, as well as compromise the steel and other materials suitable for recycling from scrap autos. Legislation was introduced to require that

automobile manufacturers develop a program to fund the removal of mercury prior to vehicle component recycling or scrapping. The bill did not pass, but manufacturers and other business interests have committed to work on a proposal for such a program before the next legislative session.

Spokane Scoop

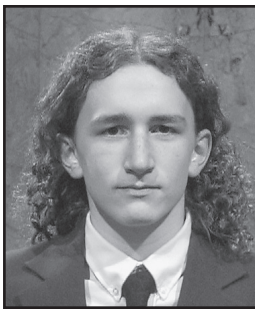
The capital budget provides funding for the following:

Spokane Valley-Rathdrum Prairie aquifer.

\$10 million to extend a grant payment to Spokane for the aquifer, which supplies drinking water to 400,000 people in Washington and Idaho.

Chewelah Peak Environmental Center. \$1.95 million for an additional dormitory and a learning studio at this outdoor education facility.

Thanks to my 2005 session pages



Adam Buchholz



Abigail Doerr



Julia Dellwo



Carter Manning



Elise Otto



Simone Phillips



Andrew Smith



Natalie Souaid



Jacob Thorpe

Education

Best education equals best future work force

Good News

K-12 schools. The budget we passed this session acknowledges the need to improve our schools so that every child – rich or poor, living in the city or in the country – gets the best education in the world.

Initiatives. Attracting and retaining a quality staff and keeping class sizes small are essential in making that happen. For the first time in two years we fully funded two overwhelmingly voter-approved initiatives: I-728, which keeps class sizes manageable, and I-732, which grants teachers a cost-of-living adjustment.

LAP and levy equalization. It's no secret that some students have a harder time learning than others. Often, students living in poverty are among those who struggle. To address this, the budget changes the funding formula for the Learning Assistance Program (LAP), which helps students who fall behind in reading and math catch up, so that it is based on poverty rather than test scores. To that end, the budget restores cuts made during the past two sessions to levy equalization, which will help out property-poor school districts.

Higher education. To remain competitive and help ensure our economy thrives, we need a well-trained work force.

Increased enrollments. One step in achieving this goal is to make sure we have room in our higher education institutions. By 2010, we will need an additional 26,000 enrollments. The budget funds close to one-third of that need, or 7,900 new enrollments.

Financial aid. With the costs of higher education increasing, families are finding it harder to afford a college education. To make financial assistance for students from low- and middle-income families more accessible, the budget provides \$70 million. The State Need Grant will now serve

families who earn 65 percent of median family income (\$43,000 for a family of four), up from 55 percent.

Disappointment

Simple majority for school levies. We were again unable to pass through the senate a bill that would have changed the 60 percent super majority needed to pass school levies to the same simple majority needed to pass other measures.

Spokane Scoop

The capital budget funds the following projects:

Washington State University-Spokane Riverpoint Nursing Building. \$31.6 million to construct the 100,000 square-foot building that will benefit students from Eastern Washington University, Gonzaga University, Whitworth College, as well as those attending area community colleges.

Spokane Falls Community College.

Business and social science building: \$18.5 million to replace three buildings with one 67,700 square-foot, two-story building.

Campus classrooms: \$82,000 for pre-design to examine alternatives for the construction of a 66,800 square-foot classroom building and early learning center.

Mobius/Inland Northwest Science and Technology Center. \$1.5 million for a world-class center that will include a 75,000 square-foot science center to be located on the north bank of Riverfront Park and a new 16,000 square-foot children's museum that opened this summer in River Park Square.

E-newsletters

This past legislative session, I began sending out regular "e-updates," short newsletters to provide interested constituents with information about what's happening in Olympia. I will continue to do that in upcoming sessions. If you're interested in getting on the distribution list, please e-mail my Olympia legislative assistant Ruthie Zimmer at zimmer.ruthie@leg.wa.gov.

Walk Across Washington

In an effort to begin or renew a commitment to physical activity this fall, thousands of workers will join together in more than 85 locations to traverse the state. Please consider joining me at **noon Oct. 14** at the **Riverfront Park Clock Tower** to walk a three-mile loop up to Gonzaga University and back. For more information go to: www.walkwashington.org



Transportation

Safety the focus of transportation budget, bills

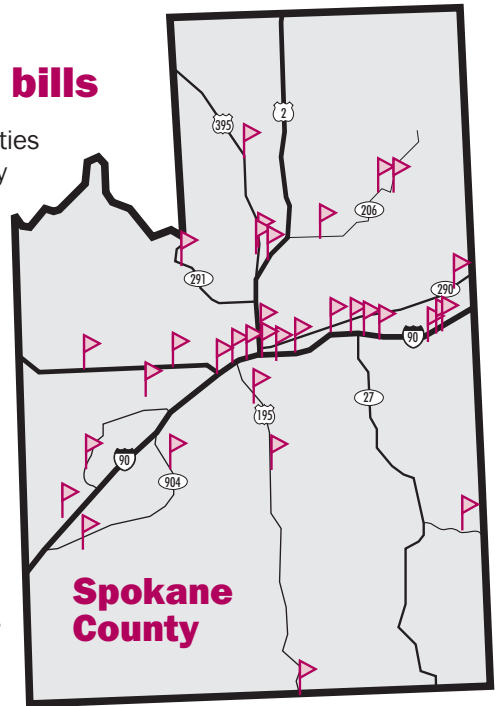
State Route 290. I sponsored a bill that will transfer a portion of state Route 290 from the state to the city-owned and -operated Trent Avenue. Currently because this street, which goes right through the New University District, is state-owned, the city cannot do anything to calm the traffic, which you undoubtedly know has been a serious problem. Passage of the bill will make this section of our district safer and less-congested.

Transportation budget. As if our city road projects weren't causing enough frustration on the roadways, there's news to report about upcoming statewide transportation-improvement projects: This year, the Legislature approved a transportation package that focuses on public safety, economic development and solving the worst traffic bottlenecks. Business leaders supported this plan because they know the future of the state is riding on our highways. The 16-year transportation budget funds more than 300 highway, bridge and intersection improvements. It will be financed through a 9.5 cent increase in the gas tax phased in during the next four years, as well as small annual weight fees on passenger vehicles.

Perhaps most important, cities and counties around the state will receive \$1 billion to deal with dangerous rural intersections, congestion on city streets and roads pitted with potholes. One penny of the new gas tax will

fund local priorities identified by city and county government. Every one of us has been touched by the stories of tragic car accidents at uncontrolled intersections on local streets. And as you know, two-lane rural roads are among the most dangerous in the state. We must invest in these potentially life-saving safety improvements.

To see a list and map of transportation projects to be funded by the 2005-07 transportation budget in Spokane County, please visit www.transinfo.state.wa.us/projects/gis/mapping.asp on the Internet. Then click on "Spokane" county.



Keeping our Kids Safe

Washington a national leader in management of sex offenders

In light of the recent crimes attributed to Joseph Edward Duncan, I've heard from many of you questioning Washington's laws regarding sex offenders. Though Duncan has not been under state supervision or control since the end of his sentence in 2000, you should know that under today's sentencing laws, he would likely still be in prison or under lifetime supervision, both of which should have prevented him from committing his recent crimes.

That's not to say there isn't more the Legislature can do. For instance, adequate funding is necessary to ensure the Department of Corrections has enough community corrections officers in the field to supervise sex offenders. And other states, including Florida, have recently enacted legislation requiring electronic monitoring of registered sex offenders who are still under state supervision. I'd like to look into how this kind of monitoring could work in our state.

For more information about sex offender laws and studies in Washington, please visit the Washington State Institute of Public Policy's Web site at www.wsipp.wa.gov and the Department of Correction's Web site at www.doc.wa.gov.



The Farmers' Market Nutrition Program, which the Tucker family uses, provides vouchers to low-income women and children to obtain fresh fruits and vegetables from farmers' markets. The program received \$250,000 in the 2005-07 operating budget, which should allow the participation level to expand by 8,000 people annually.

Spokane

Budget, bills spell big wins for Spokane

Capital budget. The capital budget funds appropriations for construction projects, and much of it is financed through the sale of general obligation bonds. Projects funded in the budget enhance communities and create jobs in every corner of the state. Highlights of projects funded in and around the 3rd District include:

- *Fox Theater.* \$2.5 million to complete construction of and open by 2006 the Art Deco facility, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- *Department of Veterans Affairs.* \$1.4 million for a new kitchen in the Spokane facility.
- *Department of Fish and Wildlife.* \$500,000 to finish the Region 1 office.
- *Spokane Parks and Recreation.* \$500,000 for acquisition of Newman Lake.
- *West Central Community Center.* \$500,000 to help complete an expansion that will provide comprehensive child care, early childhood education services, health care for women and job readiness services for low-income families in west Spokane.
- *Spokane River Whitewater Course.* \$400,000 for a park to be located near the new Sandifur pedestrian bridge.
- *Girl Scouts Inland Empire Council.* \$300,000.

Go Zags! We are lucky to have Gonzaga University in the heart of our legislative district – and I'm not just saying that because I teach there. I sponsored a bill that became law that creates a Gonzaga University license plate for its proud alumni. Revenue generated from the sales of these plates will go to Gonzaga's scholarship fund.

Bills with Spokane origins, statewide benefits become law

Strategic economic development fund. This fund is modeled after an Oregon program, which has made a critical difference in closing deals to locate new businesses in the state, helping ensure that business recruitment efforts succeed and preventing established businesses from closing and relocating.

Bicycle safety. I've led efforts for years to pass a bill authorizing "Share the Road" vehicle license plates. They finally paid off this session. The reason for the bill is two-fold: to celebrate the life of Cooper Jones, who in 1997 was fatally struck by a car as he competed in a bike race; and to bring awareness to drivers to help ensure this kind of tragedy doesn't occur in the future.

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